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EPA plane detects radiation at West Lake landfill, will release findings

by KMOV.com Staff / Russell Kinsaul News 4
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Bridgeton residents have been watched an EPA plane flying low over the landfill in town last week. Plagued for months by an overpowering smell coming from the landfill, residents have demanded answers and a solution. However, the plane wasn't measuring the smell but the radiation coming from the site.

The EPA says the plane's instruments detected radiation, but hasn't said how high the readings were. Radiation is no surprise, because radioactive waste was buried on the site decades ago.

"The report should give some good detail about more exact locations, more specific information about locations of a radioactive material at West Lake and at what levels," said EPA spokesperson Chris Whitley.

The aircraft was a specially equipped plane that can detect radiation and dangerous chemicals and has been used at the inauguration and the Super Bowl.

Area residents have long been concerned about the radioactive waste illegally dumped at the landfill and are encouraged by the testing.

"At the meeting they said that they were going to send a plane and they did and that's encouraging," said resident Dawn Chapman. "That shows that they're not just giving lip service."

The recent underground fire, under the south portion of the landfill, is 1200 feet from the nearest radioactive waste buried further to the north.

Officials say the distance is great enough to not have to worry about the two ever meeting, but if this new radioactive screening using this plane shows that there's been an underground shift and that some of the radioactive material has gotten closer to that fire, it will raise the environmental risk substantially. "I'd like to see more sampling I'd like to see up to date current soil samples done," said Chapman. "I think a lot of the residents think we'd like to know exactly what's there."

Officials say there'd be a massive effort to dig up the landfill before they'd ever let the fire reach the radioactive waste.

The EPA says it may hold a public meeting to release their test results and answer questions.